

Thank you for doing this very important vision statement for California Agriculture.

Here in the Redding Area, we are having an ongoing issue with the County Planning Dept over Class I & Class II Farmland in the Churn Creek Bottom (between Redding and Anderson). The Planning Dept seems to believe that the tax dollars they can pull away from the City of Redding are much more valuable to the county than preserving one of the few areas of prime farmland in Shasta County. The residents of Churn Creek Bottom have been fighting development for 35 years (since the freeway was put in, along with an offramp at Knighton Rd. and a Truck Stop).

The Shasta County General Plan indicates the corner will be designated as "PD" and at this time 6 acres is zoned PD, however a 100 acre development seeks approval to convert 94 acres to commercial and build a shopping center on the best soil this county has. The general plan indicates the commercial development will be strictly limited to the corner, but the planning director seems to believe the corner can be hundreds of acres.

My farm is located about 1/2 mile from there and all the surrounding land on the east and north is zoned agricultural - 5 acre minimum.

The County needs to recognize that 5 acre minimum lots are still valuable farmland...most of the growers at the Farmers Markets farm less than that and do quite well. There is a need for local produce and a big need for local organic produce. People are more health and energy conscious today than they were 5 years ago. It is sad to think of the amount of produce coming from other countries into California! This State has some of the finest Farmland and Climate Zones in the World, yet we have chosen to purchase produce from other countries that we can grow here...at the same time of year.

I believe incentives for the Counties to maintain agricultural zoning need to be done, beyond Williamson Act funding. Counties that work with the Cities to provide the services necessary, will be the counties that people want to live in. A Healthy Community has a balance of open space, farmland, Farmers Markets and City services.

The farmland that has been purchased for commercial development has been purchased for higher prices than farmers can pay to buy it. Unfortunately there is a big incentive for the landowners to sell to commercial developers.

I hope the "Vision Statement" for California Agriculture will make a difference and allow me and the others in my area to farm without the worry of policial ploys to move tax dollars to the Counties, by paving over prime farmland.

Mary Ocasion
Churn Creek Meadow Organic Farm